

DSPS: Announces partnership with Google Cloud, MTX to modernize occupational licensing operations

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MADISON, Wis. – The Department of Safety and Professional Services is partnering with Google Cloud and MTX to enhance Wisconsin’s occupational licensure review and adjudication. The Maverick AI platform—built using Google Cloud’s artificial intelligence (AI) tools—will automate certain data entry tasks that are currently conducted manually. This will improve the customer experience and will expedite entry to the credentialed workforce in Wisconsin.

“We are excited about this collaboration,” said DSPS Secretary Dawn Crim. “We have been working hard to modernize agency operations, and this is a big step forward.”

The department issues more than 240 occupational licenses in dozens of industries and fields. The list includes funeral directors, barbers, and tattoo artists. The department also issues credentials to most health care providers, including physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, physical therapists, and more. All told, the department issues close to a million individual licenses every biennium.

“This is a high-volume agency, and our workload increases every year,” Secretary Crim said. “Our agency infrastructure has not kept pace with our growth or with advancements in technology.”

Since her arrival in 2019, Secretary Crim has sought to secure additional resources for the Division of Professional Credential Processing to modernize service delivery. Governor Evers shares Crim’s commitment to the credentialed workforce and supports efforts to better serve Wisconsin’s occupational license holders.

“This is an investment in the people of Wisconsin who need their licenses to enter the workforce,” Gov. Evers said. “Modernizing license application review will get folks on the job and earning paychecks more quickly.”

The early stages of the initial licensing process for many occupations are still done by hand. Applicants fill in paper applications and mail their forms and supporting documents to the agency. Licensing staff then type the information into the agency’s database.

Crim says the antiquated process is laborious and prone to error. “This is not a modern process,” Crim said. “It relies heavily on people to do a lot of manual work collecting and entering information. There are better ways to do business.”

The Maverick AI platform has the potential to transform occupational licensing in Wisconsin. The AI technology will automate much of the data entry, freeing staff to focus their efforts on higher-level tasks, including application review and decision making.

Crim says the partnership will add to the administration’s efforts to help the state recover from the pandemic. Crim said the state’s response to COVID included creating and repeatedly tweaking a new process for temporary interstate licenses. Staff responded and implemented the new system so that health systems could quickly hire additional health care providers when COVID surged in a community—all while maintaining routine agency operations.

“Our department played an important role in the state’s pandemic response, and I am proud of the work our team did to help Wisconsin, and particularly the healthcare system, handle the unforeseen challenges we have all faced in the past 18 months,” Crim said. “However, that temporary licensing process generated a high volume of work, and our agency received no additional resources to do that work. We have definitely felt the impact.”

New technology is an essential component of process improvements, Crim adds. “Our staff work very, very hard, but they are doing their work with outdated systems and tools,” Crim said. “Our partnership with Google Cloud and MTX is a big step toward delivering our services in the way our customers expect in 2021.”

The department has also been working closely with stakeholder groups to identify and implement process improvements.

“Secretary Crim has been a true partner. We applaud her and the department for working so diligently and creatively to modernize the healthcare licensing process, and we appreciate her and the entire administration for making the healthcare workforce a priority throughout the pandemic,” said Tarese Dubiel, director of recruitment and onboarding of physicians and advanced practice clinicians at Marshfield Clinic Health System.

The department has already kicked off the partnership and is in early stages of implementation of the new technology.

The Department of Safety and Professional Services issues more than 240 unique licenses, administers dozens of boards and councils that regulate professions, enforces state building codes, runs the state fire prevention program, and maintains the award-winning Wisconsin Enhanced Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is a key tool in the multi-faceted public health campaign to address the opioid epidemic. A fee-based agency, the Department of Safety and Professional Services is self-sustaining and receives no general fund tax dollars for its day-to-day operations. With five offices and 250 employees throughout Wisconsin, DSPS collaborates with constituents and stakeholders across a wide range of industries to promote safety and advance the economy.